

DELTA PROTECTION COMMISSION

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August 11, 1995

To: Delta Protection Commission

From: Margit Aramburu, Executive Director

Subject: Report on Proposed Export of Tertiary Treated
Wastewater from the Bay Area to the Delta Area
(For Commission Information Only)

Attached for your information is a summary of a recently released report which studies "recycling" of tertiary treated wastewater generated in the Bay Area. Among the options under study are: (1) export to the Delta area; and (2) export to the Delta Mendota Canal for use in the Valley with agricultural drainwater pumped to San Francisco for release into the ocean.

This study touches on several matters of interest to the Commission including:

- * the characteristics of the tertiary treated wastewater (page 16, Table ES-5);
- * issues of salt load in recycled water (page 24);
- * movement of salts in and from the San Joaquin Valley, as recently discussed in regards to the San Luis Drain (page 29);
- * conclusions and recommendations for further study include the Delta-Mendota Canal alternative and the Delta area alternative (page 50).

A hearing on the study was held this week in the Bay Area; attached is a copy of an article from the Stockton Record.

Attachments

Plan offers sewer water for crops

Farmers say proposal is bad idea for agriculture

By Mark Prado
The Record

8/10/95

San Joaquin County farmers could find themselves using treated sewer water for their crops if a plan being developed by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and Bay Area water agencies ever comes to fruition.

The plan — known as the Central California Regional Water Recycling Project — calls for millions of gallons of treated wastewater to be pumped from the Bay Area to the Central Valley for possible use in the Delta and the Delta Mendota Canal, according to a new report.

"This would provide a drought-proof source of water," said Randy Raines, the study's coordinator. "It would be there every year, and that is the benefit for farmers."

While the proposal is only being studied now, an official with the San Joaquin Farm Bureau Federation already is saying the Bay Area can keep its treated wastewater.

"Basically, this is a way for powerful agencies to take clean water away from people who are growing food and force dirty water on them," said Russ Matthews, director of natural resources for the farm bureau. "This is very detrimental for agriculture."

Facing stringent federal clean-water guidelines, Bay Area cities are being forced to treat wastewater before it can be released into San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean, Raines said.

"The Bay Area agencies are saying, 'Hey, we got this high-quality water, and we can only use so much of it on golf courses and other things. Maybe there is another use for it,'" Raines said.

The report says the treated water could be released in the Delta to control salinity levels when flow levels are low.

The report also states that the recycled water could be used for agricultural irrigation by adding it to the Delta Mendota Canal, with overflow being stored at a reservoir that would be built near

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— Russ Matthews,
S.J. Farm Bureau Federation

Hospital Creek, eight miles south of Tracy west of Interstate 5.

As much as 650,000 acre-feet of treated water potentially could be pumped into the Central Valley by the year 2020, according to the report. One acre-foot is equal to 326,000 gallons.

The cost, however, might be prohibitive. The report estimates the treated water would cost about \$1,000 per acre-foot, compared to the \$20 to \$200 that water agencies pay for regular water.

Matthews recoiled at the idea of county farmers' using the wastewater for crops, saying it would impact agriculture negatively.

"We have canneries and shippers in San Joaquin County that are saying if we use wastewater and sewer sludge to irrigate crops, they will not buy them," he said. "As soon as people walk into a grocery store and see one bin of tomatoes grown with sewer water and another bin grown with clean water, which is the consumer going to buy? It's not good for our local economy."

But others, like Steve Bayley, deputy director of Public Works for the city of Tracy, are keeping an open mind about the idea.

"It's a good concept to study," he said. "Who knows? Twenty years down the road, we may need all the water we can get."

The Bureau of Reclamation and Bay Area water agencies have split the \$1.5 million cost of the study to date. The next step is an environmental study, Raines said.